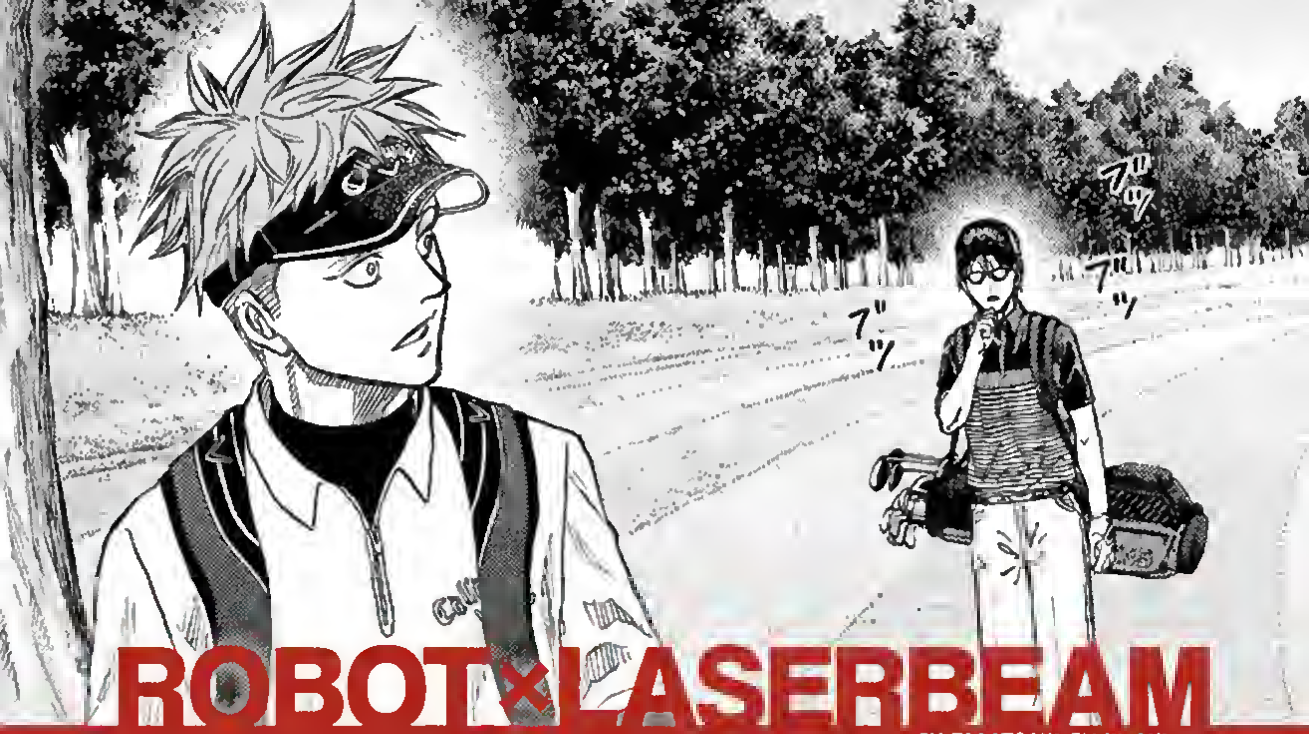


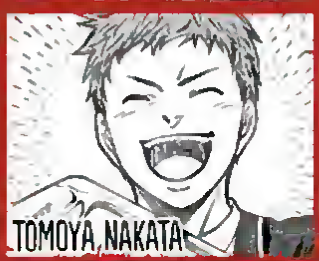
ROBOT×LASERBEAM

BY TADATOSHI FUJIMAKI

Robato Hatohara, a stupidly serious, creepily thorough and socially clueless high school boy, appears to have no interest in anything—including joining his friend Tomoya in the golf club. But when it's discovered that his perfect accuracy and calculations enable him to golf like a practiced professional, will he be able to escape playing golf?

PREVIOUSLY IN *ROBOT×LASERBEAM*:

Robato Hatohara is a socially clueless and super-serious high school student who appears to have little interest in anything around him. His only friend, Tomoya, suggests that he join the golf club with him, but he quickly refuses, saying golf is boring. After Robo demonstrates his perfect swing, famous high school golfer Yozan Miura declares Robo to be his rival! But for their rivalry to actually grow, Robo will first need to join the golf club and become a regular. .and none of the upperclassmen seem too happy about Robo's sudden demand to replace one of them. In a surprising twist, a second-year student, Rion Osanai, takes Robo up on his challenge! Well, not officially…but if he thinks Robo is just all talk, he'll make sure that Robo never plays in a real match! When their friendly competition is interrupted by some old geezers, Rion and Robo end up challenging them to a two-on-two match. Rion and Robo come out on top, but did Robo prove himself worthy enough to earn Rion's approval?



Round 11: The Secret to the Laser Beam

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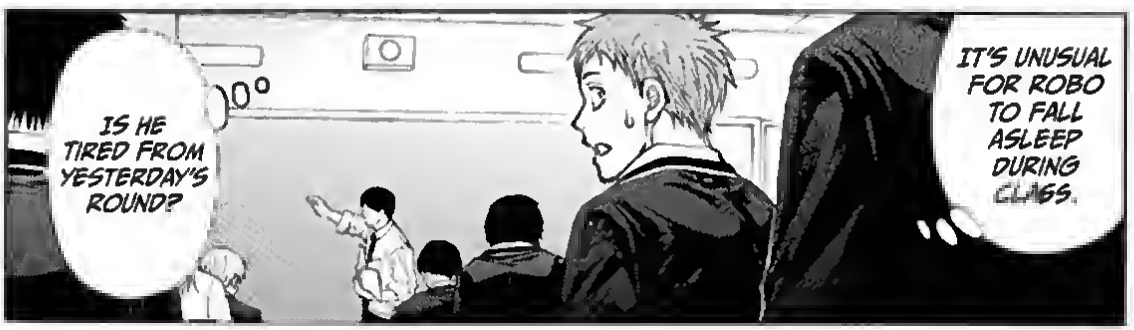

IS HE TIRED FROM YESTERDAY'S ROUND?
IT'S UNUSUAL FOR ROBO TO FALL ASLEEP DURING CLASS.

THAT'S SOME WAY TO SLEEP! HE'S SITTING SO STRAIGHT NOT EVEN THE TEACHER'S NOTICED!
AND YET HIS POSTURE'S PERFECT!
ZIIIIING
ぴし
zzzすぴー…zzz

SO WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY ?!
YOU DIDN'T STIR UP ANY KIND OF TROUBLE, DID YOU?!
Though it feels like you already have...
IT'S UNUSUAL FOR YOU TO FALL ASLEEP IN CLASS, ROBO.
IN FACT, I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU DO THAT BEFORE.
WELL NOW, IF THAT ISN'T WHAT YOU CALL STIRRING UP TROUBLE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS!
RIGHT ...!
Hold it.
AND WON IN A TWO-ON-TWO MATCH AGAINST A COUPLE OF THUGS.
IT'S OKAY. I JUST PLAYED GOLF.
JUST WALKING ALL 18 HOLES WITH A GOLF BAG ON YOUR BACK...
...IS EXTREMELY TIRING.
NOW I UNDERSTAND ALL THAT RUNNING YOU AND THE GUYS IN THE GOLF CLUB DO EVERY DAY.
ANYWAY, I DID MY FIRST COMPLETE 18-HOLE ROUND.
HUH?

IF I'M SUPPOSED TO LAST AN ENTIRE ROUND...
...I ALSO NEED TO PRACTICE AND WORK HARD.
...
AND AS YOU GET MORE TIRED, YOUR FOOTING FALTERS AND YOUR SHOTS START TO BECOME SLOPPY.
SURE, WE WON THE MATCH, BUT...
...IN THE LATTER HALF, RION-SAN WAS BAILING ME OUT THE WHOLE TIME.
HATO-HARA, WAS IT?
THE ONE WHO SUDDENLY CHALLENGED THE REGULARS?
AHA! THERE YOU ARE.
LISTEN, ROBO...
TOMOYA, YOU'RE HERE TOO?
PERFECT TIMING. YOU COME TOO. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO INVITED HIM TO THE CLUB IN THE FIRST PLACE, RIGHT?
See chapter 7.
HELLO.
UUH...
I'M UEHARA. I'M A SECOND-YEAR.

...!
THE CAPTAIN AND HIS CREW WANT TO SEE YOU.
GULP
HELLO!
PARDON US!

OH.
THEY'RE HERE.

...

ON THE SUBJECT OF WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE TRAINING CAMP THAT DETERMINES THE REGULARS AND WHICH FIRST-YEARS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ATTEND...
LET'S HEAR RION'S EVALUATION.
WE JUST WANT TO PICK UP THE CONVERSATION FROM WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO JOIN THE CLUB.

HEY, IT'S OKAY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO STIFF AROUND US.
We didn't call you here because we're angry or to chew you out.

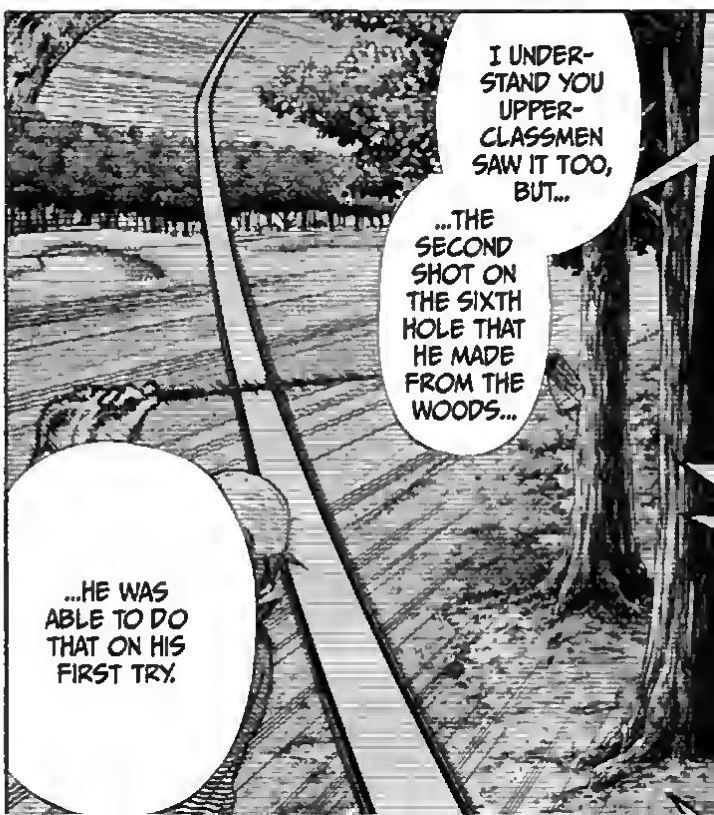
HE'S NOT EVEN WORTH DISCUSS-ING.
LIKE I SAID.
HE'S AN AMATEUR.
SURE, HIS SWING AND STRAIGHT SHOTS ARE THE REAL DEAL, AS TOMOYA AND THE CAPTAIN HAVE CLAIMED.
BUT BESIDES THAT, HE'S JUST YOUR AVERAGE SUCKY PLAYER.
ON A COURSE ALL ON HIS OWN, HE WOULDN'T SCORE WORTH CRAP.
NOT TO MENTION HE DOESN'T KNOW THE RULES AND HAS NO STAMINA.
ALL THOSE PIPE DREAMS ABOUT HIM PARTICIPATING IN THE TRAINING CAMP ARE JUST THAT— PIPE DREAMS.
SO IT WASN'T EVEN WORTH CALLING HIM OUT HERE.
IN CONCLU-SION—
BUT...

...?!
THAT'S ONLY IF...
...WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HIM RIGHT NOW.

WHAT STUNNED ME DURING MY ROUND WITH ROBO YESTER-DAY...
...WAS HIS STRAIGHT SHOTS, OF COURSE, BUT MORE THAN THAT...
...IT WAS HIS INSANE CAPACITY TO LEARN.

!

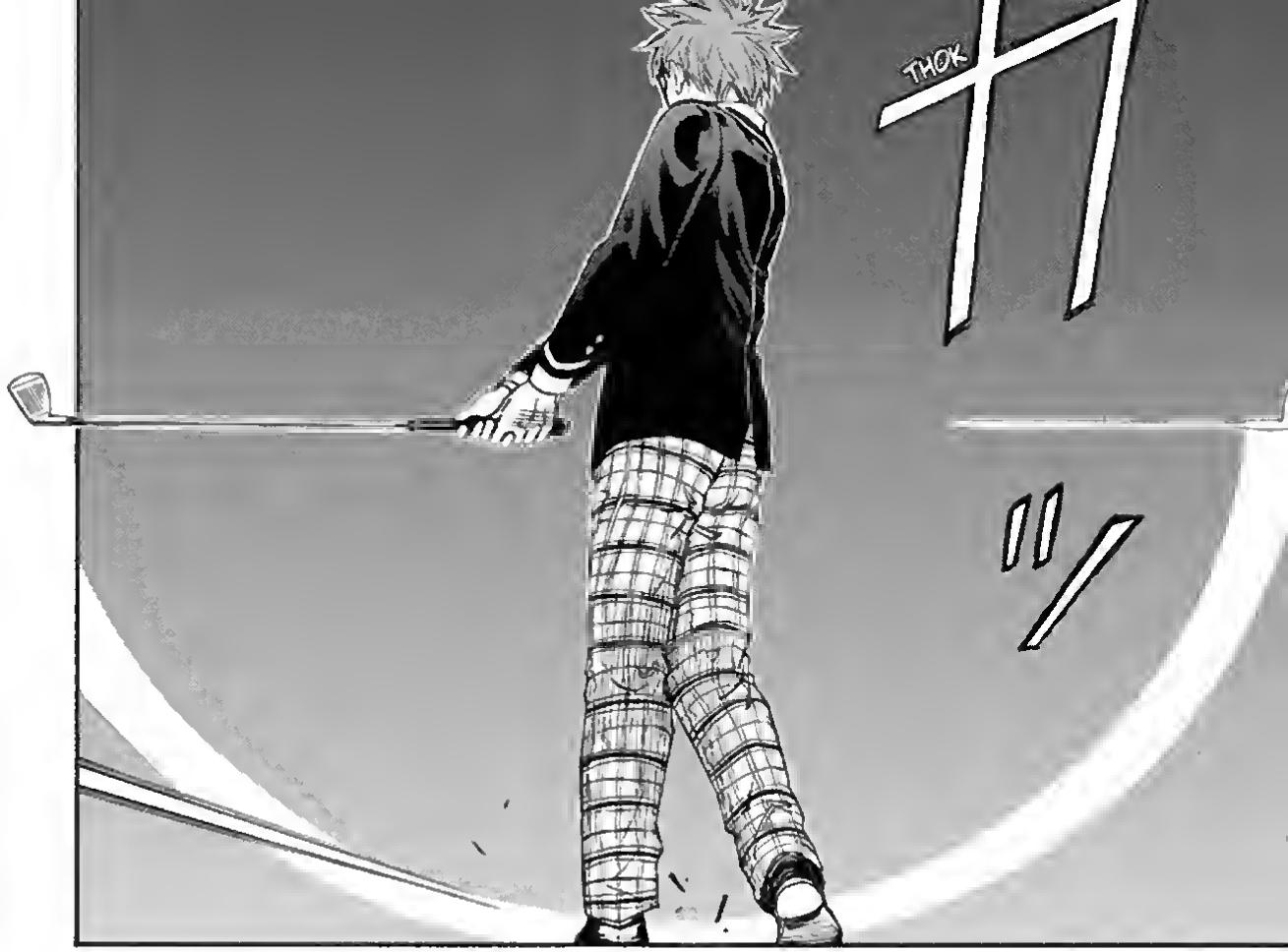
...WAS PROBABLY HIS FIRST STAB AT IT.
THEN KARASUMA WAS RIGHT...?!
...THAT SHOT HE MADE JUST NOW...
IT CAN'T BE...


I UNDER-STAND YOU UPPER-CLASSMEN SAW IT TOO, BUT...
...THE SECOND SHOT ON THE SIXTH HOLE THAT HE MADE FROM THE WOODS...
...HE WAS ABLE TO DO THAT ON HIS FIRST TRY.

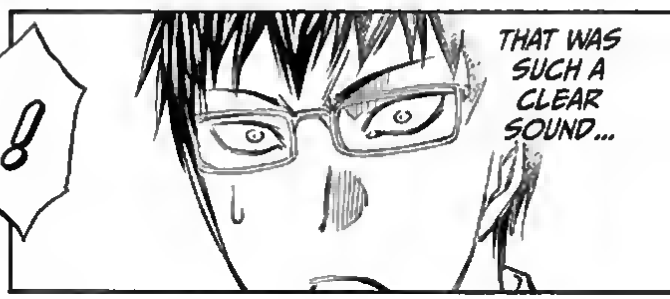
INITIALLY, I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A FLUKE.
BUT SUCH AN OVERLY PERFECT SWING PLANE ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CAN DO JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT GOOD INSTINCTS.
IT'S CULTIVATED OVER MANY YEARS.
THERE MUST BE SOME SECRET BEHIND IT.
THAT'S WHY I CALLED ROBO HERE.
IT DEPENDS ON WHAT THAT SECRET INVOLVES, BUT...
IF, FOR EXAMPLE, HE COULD SHOW US A SCORE OF 70 BY THE TIME OF THE TRAINING CAMP...
...THEN ON THAT CONDI-TION...
...I WOULD NOMINATE ROBO TO JOIN US AT THE TRAINING CAMP.
AN ORDINARY AMATEUR COULD NEVER HIT 70 IN LESS THAN A MONTH.
BUT IF IT'S AN EXTRAORDI-NARY AMATEUR WHO HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO PULL THAT OFF...
...DON'T YOU AGREE THAT HE'D BE DESERVING OF THAT EXCEPTION TO THE RULE?

DOES ROBO-KUN REALLY HAVE THAT MUCH POTENTIAL?!
OSANAI'S USUALLY QUICK TO CRITICIZE, SO THE FACT THAT HE'S SAYING ALL THIS ABOUT HIM...
THERE'S A CONDITION, BUT... OSANAI SENPAI'S BASICALLY SAYING THAT HE ACKNOWLEDGES HIM?!
UUH ...
WHOOOOA...
THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY UNCERTAIN FACTORS.
WE ARE ABSOLUTELY NOT GOING TO CHANGE THE RULES OVER THIS.
NO.
ABOUT HOW HIS SWING CAME TO BE.
THE ONE THAT ROCKED BOTH HIIRAGI-SAN'S AND RION'S WORLDS.
YOU'RE SUCH A STICKLER, I SWEAR!
THAT'S WHY I SAID THERE WAS A CONDITION.
IT LOOKS LIKE THIS KID'S STILL HIDING SOME SECRETS.
NOW, NOW, KURODA-SAN.
MY CURIOSITY'S ALSO BEEN PIQUED.

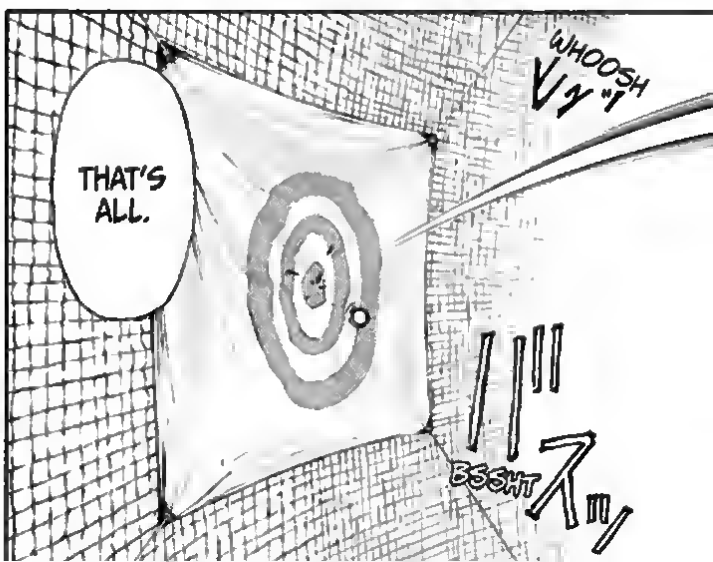
...
IT'S NOT AS THOUGH I WAS TRYING TO HIDE IT.
IT'S NOTHING ALL THAT REMARK-ABLE, REALLY.
IT'S TRUE... I'VE BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT IT TOO.
HE MUST'VE HAD SOME SPECIAL TRAINING OR SOME-THING.
MY FATHER OWNS A RESTAURANT.
WHENEVER HE TOOK ME TO SCHOOL IN THE MORNINGS ...
...HE'D FIRST MAKE A STOP AT A FIELD THAT GROWS THE FRESH VEGETABLES HIS RESTAURANT USES.
?
WHILE HE WAS HARVESTING THEM, I'D BORROW HIS CLUB AND HIT BALLS NEXT TO THE FIELD.
Uuuh.
Can I borrow that club?
LIKE THIS.


THOK

THAT WAS PERFECT...!
WOW! AMAZING!


!
THAT WAS SUCH A CLEAR SOUND...

UH-HUH.
HUH?
THAT'S IT?


THAT'S ALL.
WHOOSH
BSSHT

...
WHAAAAAT?!
IT WAS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF WHAT I WAS THINKING!
HOOOOOW?!
LET ME ASK YOU...
DID YOU DO THAT EVERY DAY?
YES.
STARTING WHEN? HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU DO IT?
SINCE BEFORE I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL...
SO ABOUT TEN YEARS.
YOU EVER HIT WITH ANOTHER CLUB AND SWING WITH AN EVEN BIGGER ARC THAN WHAT YOU JUST SHOWED US?
MY DAD'S CLUB THAT I ALWAYS USED WAS A 6 IRON.
THAT'S ALL.
I NEVER CHANGED MY SWING.
THAT WOULD MAKE IT GO TOO FAR.
AND MY DAD TOLD ME IT WAS BETTER THAT WAY.

...IS CALLED THE BUSINESS ZONE SWING.
THE RANGE OF THE SWING YOU JUST MADE...
...IS PRETTY AMAZING, YOU REALIZE THAT?
WHAT YOU JUST SAID...
HUH?
IT'S THE CORE OF ALL SWINGS, SO TO SPEAK.
THIS ZONE, BESIDES HITTING THE BALL, INVOLVES ALL THE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE SPORT.
I FEEL LIKE A BIGGER SWING WOULD BE BETTER.
TO BE HONEST, IT FEELS LACKING SOMEHOW.
HOW'S THAT?
OKAY. USE THAT CLUB TO SWING THE SAME WAY HE JUST DID.
I CAN TELL THAT YOU DON'T GET IT.
OH...

AND YOU ACTUALLY CAN HIT THE BALL MODERATELY WELL IF YOU GET A LITTLE BIT USED TO IT.
BUT IT'S STILL JUST MODERATELY WELL.
AND THAT'S WHERE BAD HABITS AND OVERCOMPENSATION SNEAK IN.
THAT'S WHY, WHEN MOST PEOPLE GET EVEN A LITTLE BIT USED TO THE SPORT, THEY GO ABOUT PRACTICING WITH BIGGER SWINGS.
A BOLDER SWING MAKES THE BALL REALLY FLY, AND IT FEELS GOOD.
THAT'S RIGHT. SOMETHING IS LACKING.

...THE TRUTH IS THAT ALMOST ALL GOLFERS FALL INTO THAT TRAP... IT'S PRACTICALLY A PREDETERMINED PATH.
THIS MIGHT SOUND CHEESY BUT...
YOU MIGHT KNOW IN YOUR HEAD THE FUNDAMENTALS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT IT'S EASY TO BECOME NEGLECTFUL.

I'VE NEVER SEEN NOR HEARD OF SOMEONE SO THOROUGH BEFORE IN ALL MY LIFE.
..HE'S CONTINUALLY PRACTICED THAT SHOT AND THAT SHOT ALONE FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS.
BUT WHETHER IT'S BECAUSE OF ROBO'S PERSONALITY OR HIS ENVIRONMENT...

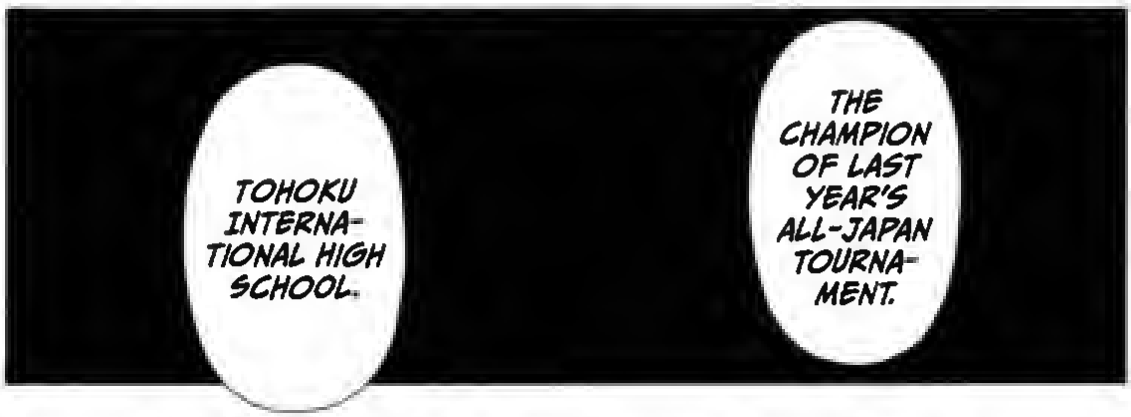
WHAT MATTERS MORE THAN ANYTHING IN GOLF...
...IS CULTIVATING YOUR SWING THROUGH REPETITIOUS PRACTICE.
THAT IS TO SAY, HIS SWING...
...IS A SUPER-PRECISE MACHINE, THE LIKES OF WHICH WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

I LOOK FORWARD TO IT. THANKS.
Akira Midooka
Eiai Academy
Golf Club Head
Coach
YES ...
YES.
NO, WE SHOULD BE THANKING YOU.
KISARAGI COUNTRY CLUB IN TOCHIGI.
THAT'S A LITTLE FAR AWAY.
Shoko Tanba
Coach
HEY, IT'S BEEN DECIDED.
WE'LL BE MAKING A SMALL OUTING BEFORE THE TRAINING CAMP FOR A PRACTICE MATCH.
WHO WILL WE BE TAKING ON?
AND WHERE WILL IT BE?

"THE EMPEROR" KYOSUKE SUZAKU.
HE'S THE CURRENT GENERATION'S STRONGEST GOLFER, WHO'S BEEN CONSTANTLY AIMING FOR THE TOP SINCE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

DON'T SAY THAT. THE COMPETITION'S COMING ALL THE WAY FROM SENDAI.
An opportunity like this doesn't come every day, you know?
...!
YOU CAN'T MEAN...

YOZAN MIURA'S SUDDEN GROWTH SPURT HAS PUT HIM IN THE PUBLIC EYE AS OF LATE, BUT HE'S STILL YOUNG.
SUZAKU HAS THE WHOLE PACKAGE.


THE CHAMPION OF LAST YEAR'S ALL-JAPAN TOURNAMENT.
TOHOKU INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL.

TOKYO'S EIAI ACADEMY.
EIAI ACADEMY?

I HEARD WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A PRACTICE MATCH.
WHO WILL WE BE COMPETING AGAINST?

IS SOMETHING WRONG?
YES.
THEY'VE GOT A GOOD TEAM—LOTS OF STRONG PLAYERS, STARTING WITH SOTA KARASUMA.
BUT BESIDES THAT, I'VE HEARD A RUMOR RECENTLY.
APPARENTLY, ONE OF EIAI ACADEMY'S FIRST-YEARS...
...IS THE GUY WHO BEAT YOZAN MIURA.
IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN THAT WILL BE UNFORTUNATE.
I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO GO EASY ON THEM...
...AND I MAY END UP BEATING THEM TO A PULP.